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NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE (NSW) ENLISTED MANNING CONCERNS: KEY ELEMENTS FOR SUCCESSFUL GROWTH AND RETENTION OF ENLISTED PERSONNEL

by

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December 2004

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   The Pentagon is planning to gradually increase the Navy's SEAL force over the next several years to meet increasing global demands. The move was authorized by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) in a program decision memorandum (PDM) in December 2002. The PDM, which directed the growth of Special Operations Forces across the board, called on the Navy to bring the equivalent of two new SEAL Teams to the force between FY-06 and FY-08. Even though funding has been allotted to this task, there may not be enough manpower to fill these slots. Training issues coupled with retention issues have brought the growth process to a standstill.

   The purpose of this thesis is to identify which major variables and/or combinations of small variables need to be changed in order to increase NSW enlisted SEAL manning. The three major areas that will be looked at are recruitment, training, and retention. The focus will be to determine where NSW can do better at managing personnel in these areas. The end product will be a detailed analysis that will offer suggestions for program changes that can be implemented to increase NSW forces while raising the quality of operators at the same time.

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ABSTRACT

The Pentagon is planning to gradually increase the Navy's Sea, Air, Land (SEAL) force over the next several years to meet increasing global demands. The move was authorized by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) in a program decision memorandum (PDM) in December 2002. The PDM, which directed the growth of Special Operations Forces across the board, called on the Navy to bring the equivalent of two new SEAL Teams to the force between FY-06 and FY-08. Even though funding has been allotted to this task, there may not be enough manpower to fill these slots. Training issues coupled with retention issues have brought the growth process to a standstill.

The purpose of this thesis is to identify which major variables and/or combinations of small variables need to be changed in order to increase Naval Special Warfare (NSW) enlisted SEAL manning. The three major areas that will be looked at are recruitment, training, and retention. The focus will be to determine where NSW can do better at managing personnel in these areas. The end product will be a detailed analysis that will offer suggestions for program changes that can be implemented to increase NSW forces while raising the quality of operators at the same time.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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LIST OF TABLES

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To satisfy the requirement for increased SEAL manning, the NSW community must examine the current options available in order to influence NSW recruiting and retention variables. The objective for increasing the enlisted SEAL inventory should include realistic methods to alter each independent variable and therefore create a large cumulative change by combining small incremental changes over time.

NSW must strive for better qualified personnel for the initial Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) pipeline training in order to raise the percentage of graduating candidates who become SEALs. This can be done through more active recruiting and marketing outside of the Navy, as well as through a more selective BUD/S candidate screening process. This strategy would give NSW a look at the prospective recruits while, at the same time, providing the recruits a preview of NSW to determine if they "fit" into the type of work environment associated with the SEAL Teams. The key idea is that quality BUD/S graduates come from quality BUD/S recruits. Our proposals would incrementally increase the SEAL manning inventory. Another retention option may be to prolong the average NSW enlisted SEAL's career through various means. Certain pays and benefits should be raised to help create an incentive for all categories of SEAL operators to remain in the NSW community. There are numerous incentive options being explored at the SOCOM and NSW level, but our emphasis is primarily focused on specialty pays and retirement. Yet another variable which may need to be addressed is the current NSW deployment strategy. Although there are required political and alliance-building concerns even during a time of war, there is a valid rationale to reduce, or even eliminate joint combined exercises from the current NSW global agenda. A changed deployment strategy may lead to better retention and other long term benefits.

Increasing the enlisted SEAL inventory will take some time to implement. However, NSW needs to make an early change to the existing force structure that is significant enough to carry out current war time requirements and sustain them during peacetime in the future. Additionally, NSW needs consistent benefits and long-term monetary compensation in order to retain enlisted SEALs for the long run.

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I.   INTRODUCTION

To satisfy the requirement for increased SEAL manning, the NSW community must examine the options available in order to influence the recruiting and retention variables outlined in our thesis. It appears that any one variable in of itself, while ignoring other variables, is insufficient to exact total successful change which the NSW community desires. The NSW objective for increasing the enlisted SEAL inventory should include realistic methods to alter each independent variable and therefore create a large cumulative change by combining small incremental changes over time. Some suggestions for NSW leaders are listed in the following paragraphs.

NSW must strive for better qualified personnel for the initial Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) pipeline training in order to raise the percentage of graduating candidates who become SEALs. This can be done through more active recruiting and marketing outside of the Navy. A recruiting emphasis on college level students and athletes would help provide more quality recruits than only an emphasis on recruiting high school students. Recruiters should, ideally, engage a larger audience to attract more qualified recruits and only send those that are "pre-qualified" to BUD/S. Additionally, recruiters should be held accountable for recruited personnel that desire to become SEALs; to include a "recruiter reward incentive" for personnel that make it through the SEAL training pipeline. This process could be started with a "Mini-BUD/S" type of program for prospective enlisted BUD/S candidates. This strategy would give NSW a look at the prospective recruits while, at the same time, providing the recruits a preview of NSW to determine if they "fit" into the type of work environment associated with the SEAL Teams. Additionally, highly qualified potential recruits could be extended an opportunity to get out of their enlisted service obligation were they not to make it through BUD/S. This would lower the cost/benefit ratio for highly qualified recruits that may, otherwise, decide not to take the risk of failing out of BUD/S and subsequently serving in the Navy Fleet for the remainder of their respective enlistments.

Future NSW funding has already been requested to build up the BUD/S pipeline with more instructors and facilities in order to push more recruits through the SEAL

training pipeline. However, the strategy of simply increasing the number of BUD/S candidates is not going to solve the NSW enlisted SEAL manning dilemma. We believe that a better screening process should be implemented to attract a higher caliber or "more qualified" individual into the existing pipeline without significantly increasing the number of new candidates checking into BUD/S. The number of graduating BUD/S candidates can, and should, be increased by improving the quality of the input, not necessarily by increasing the number of the input. The historic graduation rate of 25% isn't an NSW requirement in order to retain the quality of SEALs that the community desires. The 25% GR is simply a historic trend at BUD/S; it can be changed without watering down the training curriculum. The key idea in Chapter 2 is that quality graduates come from quality recruits. This proposal would increase SEAL manning inventory as well as retention. Arguably, higher quality recruits will ultimately evolve into higher quality SEALs who will have a positive impact on the type of personnel who might, otherwise, not stay in the community. Ultimately, a higher quality input to the NSW community would increase retention in addition to improving the manning level.

Another retention option may be to prolong the average NSW enlisted SEAL's career through improved pay and benefits. With the exception of FY02 (the post 9/11 figures), there is a historical retirement rate of approximately 60% for category E enlisted SEALs. In other words, 60% of the SEALs with over twenty years experience (category E) are lost every year (Appendix A). Especially during a time of war, there should be a focus on reducing the resignation and retirement rate among the older and more experienced SEAL. These experienced operators are critical to helping expand the force through critical instruction and mentorship. Pay and benefits must be raised to help create an incentive for this category of SEAL operators to remain in the NSW community. There are numerous incentive options being explored at the SOCOM and NSW level, but 100% retirement benefits for an operator who stays in the NSW community for 30 years may prove to be a worthwhile proposal. Correspondingly, although long term retirement improvements may help with the category E SEALs, they may not prove an adequate vehicle for keeping the category A, B, C, and D SEALs in the Navy.

In that regard, retirement changes may be the long-term retention solution, but adjusting pay and benefits may be the short-term answer. The pay and benefit problem needs to be addressed in light of the more immediate problem of losing less experienced SEALs to the world of civilian contracting companies, such as DynCorp and Blackwater. The enlisted SEAL's paycheck must become competitive with outside employment opportunities. The hard truth is that there are companies willing to pay enlisted SEALs six times their military salary. As discussed in Chapter 2, the specialty pay for enlisted SEALs should be adjusted to the corresponding levels relative to the cost of living index of the late 1960s. Simply put, SEAL specialty pay has not kept pace with the significant increases in the cost of living over the last three decades.

Yet another variable which may need to be addressed is the current NSW deployment strategy. An examination of how all enlisted SEALs are being employed around the globe during the WOT shows that many deployed SEALs are conducting joint and combined exercises for training (JCETs). During this time of war, there appears to be an argument that "If a SEAL is not directly involved in the WOT mission, then he shouldn't be deployed." Although there are required political and alliance-building concerns even during a time of war, there is a valid rationale to reduce, or even eliminate, JCETS from the current NSW global agenda. A solution may lie in the suggestion of putting most of the politically insensitive JCETs on hold indefinitely. Joint and combined evolutions are taking place every day in Afghanistan and Iraq. In this time of critical manning, NSW must look at every operator and examine how he is being utilized, or under-utilized as the case may be. By studying the true SEAL "job requirements" for this war, NSW may need to re-think what its core competencies should be in order to fit the current environment and threat. A changed deployment strategy may lead to better retention and other long term benefits.

Increasing the enlisted SEAL inventory will take some time to implement. However, NSW needs to make an early change to the existing force structure that is significant enough to carry out current war time requirements and sustain them during peacetime in the future. Increasing manpower in response to imminent threats, while decreasing manpower for diminishing threats, seems to be a historic trend throughout the US military. In order to avoid cyclical retention and manning levels, NSW should adapt

a strategy to sustain an adequate SEAL enlisted force. NSW needs consistent benefits and long-term monetary compensation in order to retain the enlisted SEAL for the long run. In order to implement plans as described above, increased DOD funding will have to be allocated to NSW.

Until recently, members of the enlisted community have not been surveyed as to why they were getting out. This is just one example of human resource and administration issues that should be addressed by the NSW community. A new survey has been constructed to try and focus on why these crucial NSW members have not stayed in the Navy, but it will take time to get an accurate sampling and compile all the raw data. As of this writing, the data is not yet available, but the survey has been completed. In that regard, the views expressed in this writing are those of the authors and not based on findings in other NSW surveys and/or studies.

In the remaining chapters, we will concentrate on different actions that can be taken to help resolve the NSW problem of an enlisted SEAL manning shortfall and a less than desirable enlisted SEAL retention rate. We have based the first model on historical BUD/S graduate data and will demonstrate a recommended strategy to utilize an optimum number of graduates by either increasing the quality of input or increasing the quantity of input to the system. The second model is based on historic Navy enlisted SEAL retention data and will help lay the groundwork for a possible retention policy which differs from the current approach being utilized by NSW leadership.

The primary focus of the thesis is to demonstrate how NSW may be able to achieve the goal of increasing the NSW enlisted SEAL force by approximately 200 SEALs while, at the same time, increasing and sustaining NSW's war fighting proficiency.

II.   BACKGROUND

Taking care of our people is the most important thing we can do as leaders. The mission is important and technology is amazing, but without the Sailors there is no chance of success PRC (SEAL) Musselman, Atlantic Fleet Sailor of the Year

(Padluck, 2003)

A.   REQUIRED SEAL MANNING INCREASE

The Pentagon is currently planning to gradually increase the Navy's Sea Air Land (SEAL) force over the next several years to meet increasing global demands. The increase was authorized by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) in a Program Decision Memorandum (PDM) in December 2002. The PDM, which directed the growth of Special Operations Forces (SOF) across the board, called on the Navy to bring the equivalent of two new SEAL Teams, or roughly two hundred additional SEALs to the force between FY-06 and FY-08. Even though funding has been allotted to this task, there is not enough NSW SEAL manpower to fill these slots. Training and retention issues have brought the growth process to a standstill. According to NSWC (personal communication, 2004 November 26) in 2003 there were 160 new acquisitions of NSW personnel. In the same year there were 158 losses due to retirement and resignation (Appendix A), or a net increase of 2 SEALs in 2003. At this rate NSW should meet its growth goal in 100 years.

As a result of OSD's direction, over 200 new SEALs will be brought on board. NSW currently consists of approximately 2,700 operators: 2,100 SEALs and 600 Special Warfare Combat Craft (SWCC) personnel. These operators make up less that one percent of the U.S. Navy personnel ("SEALs Focus", 2003, p. 3). However, for the purposes of this thesis, we will concentrate on the 1500 enlisted SEAL operators. Funding for their new billets will come from the Navy's manpower account. In addition, the NSW Command is also attempting to achieve funding in the next Program Objective Memorandum (POM) cycle for new instructors and support staff to meet training and support requirements for the growing SEAL force.

The increase marks a significant development for the NSW community, which has traditionally been reluctant to enlarge the SEAL program. There has been a fear that growing the force too quickly could water down talent. But, with the expansion of the War on Terrorism (WOT), and the increasing requirement for SEALs to join that fight, it has become apparent that the SEAL force needs to expand.

B.   HISTORY

The history of the SEAL Teams dates back to 1942 with the formation of the Naval Combat Demolition Unit (NCDU) at Fort Pierce, Florida. The men who were selected for the program came from the Naval Construction Battalions and the Navy/Marine Corps Scout and Raider Volunteers. All had extensive swim experience and all were in superb physical condition. The training was not too different fifty years ago from that of today, consisting of a great deal of physical training, swimming, and demolitions. The stress level was high by design, with training conducted day and night in the swamps of Ft. Pierce with alligators on the beaches and offshore (Halberstadt, 1993, p. 31).

While these warriors fought courageously in both World War II and Korea, the SEALs themselves were not officially born until 1 January 1962, when President Kennedy commissioned SEAL Team One for the Pacific theater and SEAL Team Two for the Atlantic theater. The original mission was to conduct Naval Special Warfare missions, which then meant unconventional warfare, counter-guerrilla, and clandestine operations in maritime and riverine environments. Their primary capabilities were to: 1) destroy enemy shipping and harbor facilities; 2) infiltrate and extract friendly force agents, guerrillas, and escapees; 3) conduct reconnaissance and surveillance; 4) conduct counterinsurgency civic action; and 5) organize, train, and lead paramilitary forces. (Halberstadt, 1993, p. 31)

In terms of physical fitness and overall mission purpose, the modern SEALs are very similar to their predecessors. In addition, they have kept up with current technology and tactics. However, as of 1 October 2001, NSW has reorganized under a new concept

for the twenty first century (NSW-21). Under this new concept, a SEAL Team's mission is to man, equip, train, deploy, and sustain SEAL platoons in support of regional and theater commanders as directed. The command deploys as an NSW Squadron to conduct Special Operation Force (SOF) missions and other taskings as directed by both joint and fleet war fighting commanders. The Commander of the Naval Special Warfare Command (CNSWC) is the final decision point for the deploying of NSW Forces. CNSWC is responsible for providing trained and ready NSW forces to theater Special Operations Commanders (SOCs) and other component commanders, consisting of maritime, ground, and air components ("Naval Special", 2002). The types of operations SEALs are trained for include: Direct Action (DA), Special Reconnaissance (SR), Combating Terrorism (CT), Unconventional Warfare (UW), Personnel Recovery (PR), Hydrographic Reconnaissance, Counter-Drug Operations (CD), Foreign Internal Defense (FID), and Information Warfare Assistance (IW). The primary mission areas for NSW consist of the core missions DA and SR. The Special Boat (SBT) and Swimmer Delivery Vehicle (SDV) Teams provide the internal mobility assets and personnel to support NSW and other Special Operations Forces' missions ("SEALs Focus", 2003). Since the events on 9/11, all SEAL Teams on both coasts have been heavily employed in the War on Terrorism.

Conducting a global War on Terrorism requires a large number of highly specialized and qualified personnel; this number is even larger when non-critical peacetime missions are still considered requirements by SOF leadership. Moreover, there is reluctance among combatant commanders to reduce engagement "requirements," such as theater security cooperation events in various NATO countries. Because the NSW community is fulfilling all of these various SEAL engagement roles during wartime, there is an even higher corresponding demand for NSW operators, specifically SEALs. This situation has created a problem for SEAL training, manning, and retention. The question, then, is how can NSW grow and sustain the force while not watering down talent and while utilizing the existing basic training structure?

C.   MANNING ISSUES

The primary personnel issue related to training revolves around the fact that, historically, only 25% of the Basic Underwater Demolition / SEAL (BUD/S) candidates who start training will actually graduate. With a 75% attrition rate, growing the SEAL force becomes especially problematic. The existing pipeline consists of Navy Basic Training (three months), BUD/S Training (six months), SEAL Qualification Training (SQT: six months), Jump School (one month) and a SEAL Team workup (approximately eighteen months). This training process, which must take place before any operational SEAL deployment, takes a minimum of two and a half years. The projected cost of sending a candidate through BUD/S is approximately $500,000. According to NSWC, the cost of the entire training pipeline to fully train a new enlisted SEAL is approximately $1 million (personal communication, 2004 November 26).

Table 1.   Seal Training Pipeline:

TRAINING:	MONTHS:
Basic Training	3
BUDS	6
SQT	6
Jump School	1
Platoon work-up	<u>18</u>
Total:	34

The first chance for an enlisted frogman to leave the military comes after 4 years of service. Since the average annual losses due to resignation or retirement have been 126 SEALs per year (Appendix A), and the final cost of training a SEAL is $1,000,000, then NSW currently loses an average of $126 million a year to resignations and/or retirements. All this money and training is wasted as soon as a SEAL steps out the door

to the civilian world. Furthermore, in most cases, his immediate superiors are helpless and can only put up passive resistance in order to prevent him from leaving.

The modern SEAL platoon, made up of 16 men, is a formidable fighting force in any arena. It contains some of the most well trained commandos in the world. The standard platoon will have, on average, 5 new personnel who are starting their prospective careers as SEALs. The platoon training, during an 18 month work-up cycle, is directly affected by new personnel in the platoon. In this regard, training can only progress as fast as the new personnel can safely and competently conduct the training. SEAL training is inherently dangerous and pushing people past a safe limit is unacceptable. Training outside of safe limits can result in dangerous incidents and possibly death, yet SEALs are expected to train in as realistic conditions as possible during training. A common saying within the NSW community is, "The more you bleed in training, the less you will in combat." If manning and retention issues result in too few SEALs, the average number of new SEAL operators in platoons will continue to rise and have a corresponding effect on training. In fact, already, the SEAL Teams are starting to see platoons with considerably more than 5 "new guys," which significantly slows down the rate at which a platoon can conduct advanced training.

If retention could be increased, platoons would enjoy the opportunity to conduct a more complex and comprehensive work-up training cycle. In turn, the quality of the SEAL operator produced would be exponentially higher.   The work-ups could concentrate more on advanced Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs) while significantly increasing the skill level of the platoon as a whole. The current SEAL Platoon is allotted 18 months to prepare for an overseas deployment. Yet, at least one-third of that work-up training time is dedicated to ensuring new SEAL operators are completely comfortable with the platoon Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) prior to an overseas deployment. By increasing retention, less "new guy" work-up time would be required. Historically, 6 months of a platoon work-up is dedicated to teaching new SEALs basic tactics while reinforcing the same fundamentals for the more experienced operators in the platoon. Essentially, without the influx of new SEALs, platoons could concentrate on advanced SEAL training for all 18 months of the work-up cycle, instead of spending 6 months of each cycle going over the basic skills for the newest operators.

The NSW community could effectively raise the probability of mission success and reduce the casualty rate for all operations with these more experienced platoons. Additionally, the knowledge base for planning operations would be increased with rehearsal and reaction times significantly reduced.

D.   RETENTION

Retention is a large concern for all components of the military. Enlisted retention within the NSW community is no exception. Even after six months of grueling training at BUD/S, the demanding training never stops. Most is undertaken at remote stateside locations and, consequently, for most enlisted NSW personnel the separation from families is long and frustrating. Following 18 months of training in the United States, SEAL platoons are deployed overseas for six months in support of combatant commanders where, again, the training never stops in order for the SEALs remain razor sharp for short-notice contingency missions.

However, while deployed, many SEAL platoons are sent to engage in training with foreign counterparts, or they sit and wait at forward deployed units for the contingency that never comes. At the beginning of the war in Afghanistan, one of the justifications for more NSW platoons not being sent into the area immediately was that the platoons were needed for contingency plans and could not be spared.   This priority structure did not sit well with most NSW operators who saw the war as a priority over either foreign training engagements or possible contingencies.

Such commandos typically join the military not only for the pay, but also because they desire to do a job for their country. A common response by an NSW operator when asked why he joined the SEALs is, "Not for the money." In fact, research has shown that pay rarely rates as one of the top three motivators in employee surveys (Collins and Devanna, 1990, p.225). Money does, however, become a factor after years of experience, and particularly after young frogmen turn into older experienced SEALs with wives and families. Also, quality of life becomes an issue for many SEALs when the benefits of the job stop outweighing the sacrifices, and when they feel that their personal sacrifices are

not being rewarded. A growing number of SEALs are leaving the community thanks to the financial opportunities offered by the Private Military Industry (PMI), which has grown exponentially since the start of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Older SEALs who value time with families and quality of life are starting to move towards these PMI careers. *On average* a SEAL can earn between $150,000 and $300,000 working security details in overseas combat zones (Heylar, 2004, p. 81). The average pay for an enlisted SEAL is approximately $50,000 (DFAS, 2003). While in-country, PMI positions may involve the same amount of time away from home and family, they do not involve extensive traveling from home to train when personnel are not overseas.

One way to combat the temptation for enlisted NSW personnel to leave the force for such PMIs is to increase the pay that SEALs receive. The CNO has stated that

> Targeted bonuses such as SRBs (Selective Reenlistment Bonuses) are critical to our ability to compete for our highly trained and talented workforce both within the Navy and with employers across the nation as well. Proper funding, adequate room for growth and the flexible authorities needed to target the right skills against the right market forces are important to the shape of the workforce. This program specifically targets retention bonuses against the most critical skills we need for our future (Vern Clark, 2004).

However, even taking into account the SRB combined with a period of American economic growth, the military has been hard pressed to match the corresponding paychecks for PMI jobs in the civilian sector during this time of war. As will be shown in Chapter 3, SRBs are not playing enough of a role in the retention of quality SEAL operators. Even with these bonuses, specialty pays, various allowances, life insurance benefits, retirement benefits, and family medical benefits, the Navy is having a difficult time keeping pace with the significant pay being offered by the private sector.

Another retention strategy to be discussed will be alternatives to the current retirement plan for enlisted SEALs. An enlisted SEAL, like any member of the military, can retire with full benefits after 20 years of service. However, in most cases, that same SEAL is far from being able financially to stop working. Current retirement pay and benefits fall well short of providing the equivalent quality of life that is offered during military service. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, retirement pay does not appear to be

enough of an incentive to keep an enlisted SEAL operator in the Teams, especially with PMI companies actively recruiting SEALs with recent war-time experience. In that regard, retirement benefits, not just pay, need to be augmented in order to keep quality personnel in the Teams.

Retention has been a major focus for several years within NSW and continues to be a high priority today. A similar problem to the current issue of the enlisted retention occurred several years ago in the officer community. The mass exodus started in 1997 when a large number of SEAL officers removed themselves from the ranks of active duty frogmen. In 1997 a survey was conducted by Naval Special Warfare leaders to try and figure out why the officers were getting out. During resignation interviews of 15 SEAL officers, all holding the rank of Lieutenant, "Most officers expressed frustration in believing that they would never be used in missions for which they were trained. This was a prevalent theme for almost all officers interviewed. It was cited by many as having a strong influence on their decision to leave the Navy" (Davids, 1998, p.94). The original NSW consensus before 9/11 was that SEALs were getting out due to the lack of meaningful employment. Yet, post-9/11, the SEAL Teams have been heavily engaged in the WOT. What, then, is the determining factor for enlisted SEALs now? Unless this question can be answered and addressed, NSW cannot hope to meet its future staffing requirements. For the fact remains, this retention problem plagues NSW by depriving the community of both well trained personnel and the critical funds which are wasted by training personnel who ultimately leave.

Immediately after 9/11, a high tempo of operations (OPTEMPO) seemed to have a desirable effect on NSW retention and appeared to be the catalyst for increased retention throughout the community. There were increased retention numbers for both NSW officers and enlisted sailors. The FY02 retention numbers were up for all SEALs, SWCC, and support personnel (Appendix A). Now, however, there appears to be a trend towards SEALs once again looking to leave because they are deployed too much and not always employed for what they consider to be true SEAL missions.

By comparison, the regular Navy is also having the same problem with retention and has implemented its own initiatives. The regular Navy used to have the luxury of

withstanding a high turnover rate, and actually saved money by keeping work force salaries at the lower pay levels. This will not remain the case since jobs are getting more technologically advanced in all areas of the Navy. The problems with recruiting first-term enlistees are exacerbated by the fact that the Navy has historically lost about one-third of its enlistees before they have completed their initial terms of service. The other services are also focusing attention on the retention problem and how to keep airmen, sailors, marines, and soldiers in the military. "To obtain this type of information, DOD and the services are making progress collecting accurate data on why people leave the service early" (GAO Report, 2004).

Current NSW enlisted retention is above Navy averages and at the end of FY04 was at 68.8% (Appendix A). Although this is better than the community retention rate in FY03 (65.8%), NSW still needs to improve retention in order to meet the desired end-state of increasing personnel by 200 enlisted SEALs. With the current surge of SEAL Team deployments in support of the WOT, the corresponding strain of time overseas will increase and NSW can expect even lower retention rates in the future if the issue is not urgently addressed within the SEAL community.

E.   CONCLUSION

Larger conventional forces are no longer the answer in an age of asymmetric warfare. Today's military needs to fight with highly qualified and trained professionals such as the members of the NSW community. However, if NSW does not compete with other civilian companies, the SEAL community will fail to retain the top performers and, in the end, the cost will be failed missions and lives lost. In today's military, there is still a conventional human resources mode of thinking that needs to be replaced with modern corporation human resource techniques. The NSW community is, quite simply, in competition for human resources with other contracting security companies. To not think along these lines and to assume there will always be loyalty to the SEAL Teams would be

a critical mistake for NSW. If a change is not made, the SEAL community will lose a large portion of experienced operators to competing security companies such as Blackwater and Dyncorp.

There needs to be an NSW examination of the long term impact of personnel retention strategies. In short, the current strategy must change in order to maintain a SEAL force structure that will achieve mission success. A required element for retaining these special operators is sending them to conduct real world operations; in essence, doing the job they signed up for. If SEALs are not conducting operations, yet are still deployed far from home while training or waiting for a contingency, there must be some monetary compensation offered that can and will compete with the compensation offered by PMI companies. Utilizing two models, this thesis will demonstrate that, as much as loyal frogmen hate to admit it, pay is an integral piece of the puzzle for SEALs when making important career decisions and future plans for themselves as well as their families.

Not everyone who makes it through SEAL training desires to remain in the community. Although the average retention rate for the last four years is not bad when compared to the Navy as a whole, there are still too many SEALs getting out of the community to match the OSD stated goal of 200 more SEALs by FY08. In the last four years, over 500 SEALs left the Navy; if that average resignation and retirement rate were cut by 40%, the manning increase problem would be solved without even examining and/or changing attrition rates at BUD/S. Additionally, these retained operators would be experienced SEALs, not "new guys."

III. NSW INVENTORY GROWTH THROUGH RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

A. BACKGROUND

The goal of this chapter will be to create an expected value model which shows the most ideal method for increasing Naval Special Warfare (NSW) SEAL manning and growth requirements. NSW manning needs to grow by approximately 50 enlisted SEALs each calendar year in order to achieve OSD and CNO mandated manning levels for two new SEAL Teams by 2008. We currently have a little over 1500 enlisted SEALs in the NSW community and need at least 200 more to achieve this goal. Of note, the current inventory for enlisted SEAL billets is resting at about 89% of the authorized billets. The 200 enlisted SEAL increase mentioned above does not take into account this inventory gap between the current 89% and a possible 100% enlisted SEAL billet inventory.

For this problem, we will concentrate on the Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) graduating class size. There are five classes per year and the current class sizes average 180 candidates; the attrition rate is historically 75%. That means, on average, 45 BUD/S candidates graduate from each class. In order to completely satisfy the OSD requirement of 200 additional enlisted SEALs by 2008, these annual numbers need to increase from 225 graduating candidates (45 per class) to 275.   In this chapter, we will discuss three possible solutions for increasing the number of BUD/S graduates. Our possible solutions will include: a) increasing the number of candidates attending BUD/S by increasing input numbers, b) improving the quality of candidates for BUD/S before they ever show up in Coronado, or c) a combination of both increasing the input and improving the quality of candidates with orders to BUD/S.

1. Assumptions

In order to set up courses of action (COAs) for an expected value (EV) model, the following assumptions have been made based on a historical drop-out (attrition) rate of 75%. Assumptions:

The incoming candidate physical readiness test (PRT) standards will remain the same.

The physical training standards during BUD/S will not change for candidates.

For the purposes of the model, class sizes will be defined as 180 candidates (the current capacity for any given BUD/S class).

The Navy Recruiting process remains unchanged.

Data used in the model will be from FY01-FY04. The post-9/11 data reflects the effect of deployments in support of the War on Terrorism.

The attrition rates are based on historical data from the NSW Training Command in Coronado, California as well as data from the Community Manager in Washington D.C.

"New Accessions" are SEALs who have successfully completed the BUD/S training pipeline.

2.   The Model

The overall goal must be an average increase of 50 New Accessions each year in order to achieve the goal of 200 new enlisted SEALs in the NSW community (see Table 2). When taking into account the averages among New Accessions, retirements, and resignations, there is a current annual average net gain of 2 personnel in the NSW community.

The first COA, or COA-A, pursues the idea of maintaining a constant input number, yet decreasing the attrition rate of 75% by increasing the quality of the input through improved recruiting techniques. Another way to state this is to increase the graduation rate (GR) through a higher quality input. According to NSWC, historically the GR at BUD/S is only 25% (personal communication, 2004 November 26). COA-B represents the option of increasing the input numbers for BUD/S training, but not changing the GR. In other words, we would see more candidates showing up for training, and ideally the 25% GR would remain the same, therefore increasing the number of New Accessions or BUD/S graduates. COA-C represents a combination of both COA-A and COA-B.

Table 2.   Desired Manning Increases From Bud/S

A bar chart titled with y-axis values from 1450 to 1750 in increments of 50, and x-axis categories FY-05, FY-06, FY-07, FY-08. Legend: Projected Increases, Desired Increases.
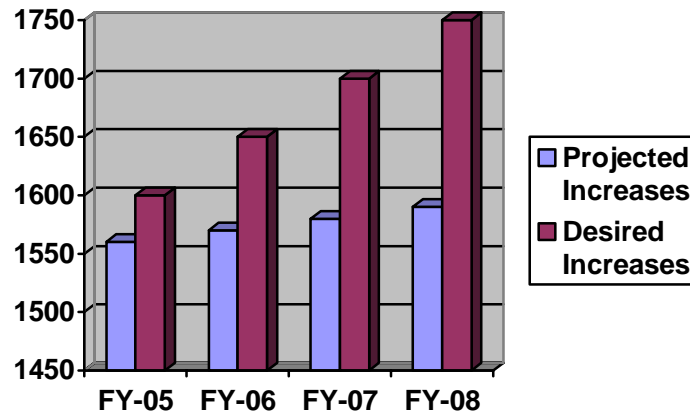
B.   COA-A (BETTER RECRUITING)

To change the characteristics of the input (candidate coming to BUD/S) we need to examine the quality of the individuals coming to Coronado from Boot Camp. If a candidate is mentally and physically prepared for the demands of BUD/S, there is an increased EV for successful completion of the course. Currently, the majority of BUD/S candidates are screened at Boot Camp for compatibility with the SEAL training program. After a successful SEAL PRT and a recommendation from the SEAL Motivator (one of the SEALs who administers the PRT) at Boot Camp, the prospective BUD/S candidate is usually recommended for BUD/S and will eventually receive orders from his detailer to the NSW Training Center in Coronado. The graduation rate in COA-A is a function of the tough standards of BUD/S and the quality of individual inputs.

The main goals of any personnel selection system are to hire qualified applicants and to fairly assess the ability of all applicants (Muchinsky, 2003, p. 169). More focus on the recruiter's office and the procedure of getting new Navy recruits out of the civilian sector may be beneficial to the process of increasing the quality of the BUD/S input. Instead of having BUD/S determine who is qualified to meet the required abilities, the process could (and probably should) be done sooner at the recruiter level. It is important

to test mental and physical capabilities prior to a candidate entering BUD/S in order to determine if he will make it through the training or not. In order for BUD/S candidates with a higher chance of success to arrive at Boot Camp, the recruiters and/or SEAL Motivators would need to reach out to High Schools, sports clubs, the Boy Scouts, JROTC, collegiate athletic programs, and the community in general in order to get these "better" candidates into the initial Navy training pipeline that would culminate with BUD/S.

One of the significant hurdles facing recruiters is the 4 year commitment contract that a new recruit must sign prior even to attending boot camp in order to "try out" for BUD/S. If the recruits do not make it to, or fail out of, BUD/S they are left with a considerable commitment to the Navy for four years of difficult shipboard duty. This is a substantial military commitment for well qualified candidates who also have many promising career opportunities in the private sector. These private sector jobs usually do not require any sort of commitment that compares to 4 years of mandatory service in the US Navy.

In order to recruit the best of the best out of the private sector, the NSW community needs to have a program in place that will allow for an initial screening test with an "out" option for those BUD/S candidates who do not make it through SEAL training in Coronado. The proposal is that when a perspective BUD/S candidate walks into the recruiter's office, he would be eligible for a program that allows him to attempt BUD/S training without being locked into a Navy commitment when he signs on the dotted line in the recruiter's office. The SEAL Motivator program could assist in this aspect of screening prior to a candidate signing an enlistment contract. Of course, there may be considerable hurdles with this proposal stemming from the fact that the candidate would not be subjected to the same enlistment terms as other enlistees. However, the changes required in order to get more qualified personnel in the SEAL training pipeline will certainly necessitate significant changes to the current recruiting standard operating procedures.

In June of 2002, a thesis was submitted at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California by two Special Forces Officers researching a way to increase the

number of qualified recruits for the United States Army Special Forces Command (USASFC). The title of the thesis is: *Tactics, Methods and Techniques to Improve Special Forces In-Service Enlisted Recruiting*. In this thesis Robert Burrell and Steve Swierkowski examined the recruiting practices of several large private sector firms. The issues described in their thesis are similar to the issues that NSW faces today. Some of the conclusions they reached in their study are listed below (Burrell & Swierkowski, 2002, p. 51):

Target the best.

Raise recruitment standards.

Begin tracking and measuring recruiter effectiveness.

Attach the recruiter's name to everyone he recruits.

Establish a formal candidate referral program.

Improve recruiter knowledge of those for whom he is recruiting.

Send the best officers and non-commissioned officers to lead recruitment efforts.

Ensure that rewards and incentives support the bottom-line.

These conclusions for SF recruitment practices should be closely scrutinized by NSW personnel involved with enlisted SEAL recruiting. These are techniques utilized by corporate head-hunters as well as coaching staffs of professional football teams. We would note that none of the eight conclusions listed above currently apply to acquiring a perspective BUD/S candidate from the civilian world and persuading him to join the Navy.

Regardless of how recruiting can be adjusted, the NSW community should do everything possible to ensure a BUD/S candidate is fully prepared for the arduous six months of SEAL training which is followed by 28 months of follow-on training before that graduate's first deployment overseas. There is an NSW program in place used to help prepare perspective officer candidates for the environment of BUD/S. The program, termed "Mini-BUD/S," is held twice each year and may help explain why officers enjoy a much higher GR than enlisted candidates. Historically, 65% of officer BUD/S

candidates graduate from the program (NSWC personal communication, 2004 November 26). In general, Mini-BUD/S introduces a BUD/S officer candidate to the harsh physical and mental treatment he can expect to see when he "classes up." Mini-BUD/S officer candidates are exposed to a portion of every phase of BUD/S training. They experience the cold water, sleep deprivation, and the generally stressful environment they will encounter in the BUD/S compound. Most importantly, these officer candidates become mentally prepared for BUD/S.

Mini-BUD/S not only tests the officer applicants for the basic qualifications it will take to make it through BUD/S, but the program also gives the applicant a preview of what BUD/S entails. A preview allows the applicant a chance to see if he actually fits into the position he is seeking (Muchinsky, 2003, p.136). By allowing an enlisted candidate to determine whether he is willing to go through the harsh environment of BUD/S or not, the NSW community would be giving an enlisted BUD/S candidate the opportunity to drop from training before he actually reports to BUD/S. An unintended consequence of allowing a perspective candidate to drop from training before actually starting would be that another BUD/S candidate would be afforded the opportunity to become a BUD/S candidate. This alternative technique of allowing personnel to gain a preview of what is in store for them would increase the BUD/S GR.

A small increase in the GR can represent a significant increase in the number of graduates every year (See Table 3). While maintaining a constant numerical input of 180 candidates per class (or 900 per year), NSW must change the characteristics of the input number in order to create a higher GR. When the EV (COA-A) = 275 New Accessions each year, NSW will be satisfying the CNO requirement. If 25% of 900 new BUD/S candidates successfully complete BUD/S (225 graduates), then the annual goal of 50 additional graduates will be attained with a slightly higher GR of 30.6%:

Desired Graduation Rate

$$\frac{(275...Desired...Graduates)}{(900...Candidates)} = .306 = 30.6\%RR \text{ (desired GR)}$$

Table 3.   Effect of increased graduation rates (annually)

Graduation Rate (GR)	26%	28%	30%	32%	34%	36%	38%
Number of Graduates	234	252	270	288	306	324	342

Ideally, a GR of 30.6% is required to meet the required number of New Accessions each year.   If (COA-A) $\geq$.306, then NSW will have a successful model resulting in at least 275 graduates each year which matches the goals as set forth in Table 4.   However, a pure COA-A strategy may be un-realistic.   Later, we will look at a possible combination of both COA-A and B.

Table 4.   Increased Quality Of Fixed Inputs To Bud/S (Pure Coa-A)
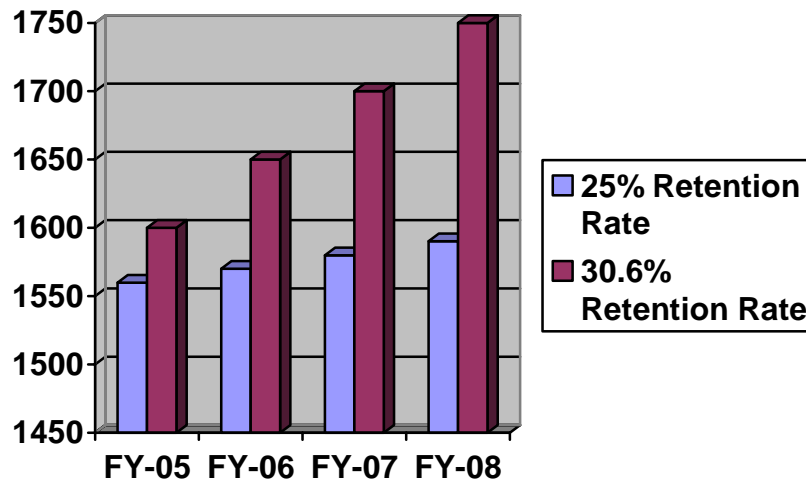
C.   COA-B (MORE CANDIDATES FOR TRAINING)

The opposing COA to the above option displays the number of New Accessions (output) as a direct function of the number of BUD/S candidates brought into the program (input). If 225 candidates are currently graduating each year with a 25% GR, then it would follow, as in COA-A, that there is an initial input of 900 candidates. However, in

this case, if the growth goal is a net increase of 50 New Accessions each year (275 total BUD/S graduates per year), then the desired input for COA-B would be 1100 candidates. In a pure COA-B scenario, 1100 BUD/S candidates would need to attend BUD/S each year, or 220 in each class. That means 40 additional candidates for each class (220-180 = 40) and 200 additional candidates per year (see Table 5).

Table 5. Increased Inputs W/Constant Attrition Rate (Pure Coa-B)
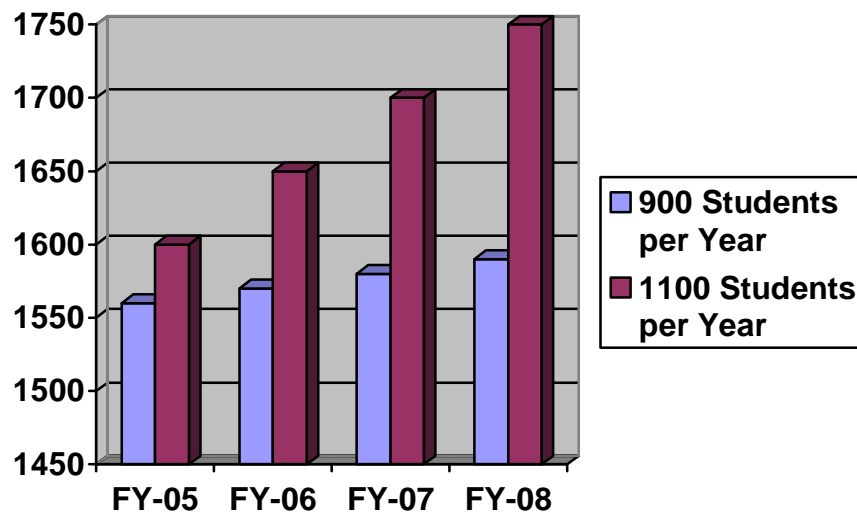
The question for the NSW community is how to find another 200 Navy personnel each year that can still achieve the 25% GR. On the surface, this COA appears to work. However, there may be problems with a pure strategy of simply increasing the input to increase the resulting output. For example, if candidates are to still come straight from the same input sources, there may be a watering down of PRT standards in order to meet a "quota" for each class.

If PRT standards are lowered for any reason, the result will most probably be a higher attrition rate at BUD/S (or a lower GR). We could, theoretically, see a COA-B situation where the required 1100 candidates attend BUD/S, yet the graduating numbers still hover at 225 *or lower* because of a less-qualified pool of candidates. Setting a quota for the input number without making any adjustments for pursuing a "better" candidate

22

could result in not only less than 1100 graduates during any given year, but circumstances could exist where there would be even fewer graduates than NSW sees today. Additionally, since putting a candidate through BUD/S costs approximately $500,000, another 200 candidates would cost the Navy an additional $100,000,000 each year (NSWC, personal communication, 2004 November 26). The possible watering down of PRT standards, as well as increased overhead costs for new military construction, more instructors, more training equipment, more vehicles, and more boats may pave the path for another option: COA-C.

D.   COA-C

Although, in theory, each of the aforementioned COAs could solve the BUD/S graduation problem, each EV is really a function of candidate motivation, physical preparation, and natural ability. While concentrating only on the quality of input may be unrealistic, simply increasing the input numbers may be cost prohibitive. The "needs of the Navy" may require a combination of both COAs instead. For example, the ideal combination may be to accept 960 candidates to BUD/S during a given year (192 candidates per class) and strive for a new GR of 28.6% (highlighted in Table 6). Each of the combinations in Table 6 represents an annual percentage GR on top and the corresponding number of BUD/S candidates that would start training that year on the bottom. Each combination results in a net increase of 50 new BUD/S graduates each year. Additionally, Appendix B shows the input number of candidates required throughout the entire possible range of graduation rates (0-100%).

Table 6.   GR and associated INPUT to obtain net gain of 50 graduates per year

.306	.299	.293	**.286**	.281	.275	.270	.264	.259	.255	.250
900	920	940	**960**	980	1000	1020	1040	1060	1080	1100

E. CONCLUSION

Whether or not an individual will make it through Basic Underwater Demolition / SEAL training depends on countless different variables. A candidate's age, Navy rating, experience in the Navy, physical and mental readiness, hobbies, background in high school sports, and the psychological motivation to graduate from BUD/S are just a few of the unknowns. Many in the NSW community feel that a pure COA-B will satisfy the new OSD requirements. However, based on the steep hyperbola curve depicted in Appendix B, there are significant problems with the COA-B option. For example, there could be a slight and unforeseen drop in GR for one year. If the average GR for a year were to drop to 20% with COA-B, the number of candidates required to meet that year's quota of 275 graduates would jump to 1375 candidates. That is 475 more BUD/S candidates than the NSW training center sees during a year when every BUD/S school billet is taken. The corollary to this is that a corresponding 5% drop in GR given the COA-A strategy (from 30.6% to 25.6% retention) only equates to an additional 183 required candidates, 292 *less* candidates than would be required in COA-B to make up for the difference in GR (see Appendix B). Due to the financial requirements for building and supporting a significantly larger SEAL training course, if NSW were to follow the COA-B approach, the more logical response would be to lean toward COA-A, with some modifications.

For instance, if a feasibility study could be completed in order to determine how many more BUD/S candidates could be accepted based on existing barracks, equipment, and instructors, we would have a COA-B number to enter into Table 6 or Appendix B for a combined solution. The resulting GR percentage would then be the new graduation goal for the training center. The true challenge for the NSW community would then be to create a program instead of (or in addition to) the current SEAL Motivator program at Boot Camp. If perspective candidates were routed through a Mini-BUD/S type of program, the GR could be expected to rise significantly, ideally at the rates depicted in Table 6.

Of course, there are significant hurdles involved with the integration of an enlisted Mini-BUD/S type of program. But, if the NSW community could examine the SEAL Motivator program, there may already be a foundation upon which to build. Essentially, the SEAL Motivator program could be evaluated, changed, and expanded in order to absorb some more of the recruiting responsibility. SEAL Motivators could play an essential role in recruiting at the grass roots level.

However, it seems that growing the SEAL force by recruiting and training improvements alone may not ultimately raise the enlisted SEAL force to the desired level. The only feasible way to achieve the goal of two new SEAL Teams by 2008 may be to utilize these improvements in conjunction with NSW retention improvements. Current force retention issues are discussed in Chapter 3.

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IV. INCREASING NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE RETENTION

A. BACKGROUND

In this Chapter, we have created another expected value (EV) model which suggests an ideal method for increasing Naval Special Warfare (NSW) enlisted SEAL retention. In the last four years, there have been positive retention gains realized throughout the NSW community. However, there are still key areas where the percentages of retained personnel are dropping significantly. In order to increase the NSW billet inventory by 200 SEAL operators by the end of FY08, a strategy needs to be adopted that not only yields an increased graduation rate from BUD/S (see Chapter 2), but increases retention for current operators to include seasoned veterans who have over 20 years of experience.

To develop this strategy, we will concentrate on two categories of NSW operator. Both groups have been identified in Appendix A, which identifies five categories that apply to the enlisted SEAL community. Specifically, we examined two enlisted SEAL categories that appear to suggest opportunity for improvement in the recorded retention percentages. The first Category is represented by SEALs with 10-14 years experience in the Navy and/or on the Teams. The second group consists of those operators with over 20 years of experience and, in turn, eligible for retirement from the military. By creating a model that concentrates on these two classes of NSW personnel, we will be able to identify the most logical area on which the NSW leadership should concentrate its efforts in order to increase retention as soon as possible.

1. Assumptions

The retention rates in this Chapter are all based on historical data from the NSW Command Headquarters in Coronado, California, as well as data from the Community Managers in Washington D.C. and Millington, TN. In order to set up an EV model, the following assumptions have been made:

Retention numbers will come from only enlisted SEAL data and will not include Special Warfare Combat Craft (SWCC) personnel.

Base Pay will remain the same and will continue to follow historical annual increases.

Requirements and periodicity of promotion will remain unchanged.

Deployment cycles and rotations will not change significantly.

The current SEAL basic training pipeline will remain the same.

Deployment work-up training cycles will follow the current template.

The Navy Recruiting process will remain unchanged.

2. The Model

The goal of the retention model is to show NSW leadership where to focus retention efforts. Answers to retention questions in the past have ranged from shorter deployments and less time away from home, to simply more money for the enlisted sailor. However, there appears to be a strong correlation between retention and overall pay. The bottom line for many enlisted SEALs, especially those who have been around for a while, seems to be money.

When looking at SEAL specialty pay today versus the same pay in the late 1960s, there is a valid argument that none of the various forms of enlisted SEAL specialty pay have kept up with the value of the dollar. Today, an enlisted SEAL is eligible for demolition pay, jump pay, and dive pay on a monthly basis. During Vietnam, a Frogman could count on 36% of his paycheck coming from various forms of hazardous duty supplemental pay (Troy, personal communication, 2004 November 20). Today, such specialty pay makes up less than twenty percent of an enlisted SEAL's paycheck. Obviously, there is a strong case for a significant increase in monetary compensation for, arguably, the toughest job in the military. Organizations that wish to attract and retain competent employees have to pay competitive wages. If wages are set too low, competent people will obtain better paying jobs elsewhere (Muchinsky, 2003, p. 74).

Contracting out tasks which are not part of a business's core competency, is a trend that is growing exponentially. The military has also taken this business approach

onboard and is contracting out everything from logistics to personal protection in combat zones. Although not a core SEAL mission or part of the Mission Essential Task List (METL), personal security detachment (PSD) has grown into a mission set for the SEAL Teams in the WOT. Numerous studies in the private and public sector have concluded that this business practice of contracting out tasks can greatly reduce costs. It is also a business that is likely to grow.

With the decline of regional superpower conventional wars, conflicts important for national strategy and interests have become more difficult to pursue due to long term political repercussions. Add to this the growing number of countries unable to provide their own national and regional security, which include the breakaway countries of the former Soviet Union (to include Azerbaijan, Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania) and African countries in conflict over natural resources (such as Liberia, Ghana, Senegal, and Nigeria). Due to security concerns in the aforementioned areas and the need for additional security in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Private Military Industry (PMI) has significantly increased overseas security contracts. For nation states, the utilization of these companies has proven to be less costly than maintaining large standing armies and less politically problematic than calling up reserve forces. However, for these lucrative companies the short term profits have been very substantial.

These firms have taken their toll on NSW and other SOF communities. The PMI industry pay $150,000 to $300,000 a year for ex-SEALS to conduct similar jobs to those active duty SEALs are performing in countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq (Helyar, 2004, p.82). This is 3 to 6 times the salary of Navy enlisted SEALs. There is a growing retention concern within the NSW community as more and more SEALs interview with PMI companies such as Blackwater and Dyncorp. As the requirements for SEAL operators increase in critical WOT regions, the community is seeing a downward slide in retention of experienced SEALs (Appendix A).

The question, then, is not what would keep NSW operators in the job; but rather, how should money be used as leverage to help keep the reenlistments and retention at higher rates? A simple model demonstrating two different COAs to answer this question

will be useful to those leaders who determine how much pay NSW personnel are to receive, and for what.

While comparing the overall Navy retention percentages to those of the NSW community, we will use the CNSWC template which breaks down the years of service into categories. The categories examined are separated by years of service. For example, Category A represents a sailor with 0-6 years experience, while Category E represents 20+ years of experience (see Table 7).

Table 7.   Category Per Years of Service

Category	Years Experience
A	0-6 yrs
B	6-10 yrs
C	10-14 yrs
D	14-20 yrs
E	Over 20 yrs

In general, the NSW community has better retention than the Navy, and the retention trends often mirror those of the Navy as a whole. However, in Category C, the 2001 NSW retention percentage was higher than the Navy average, but in the last two years has steadily dropped to well below the Navy average (see Table 8). Thus we will focus on this Category. Even though the NSW Category E numbers are consistently higher than the Navy averages, the retention percentage has been well below 50% for three of the last four years. This represents another area where significant changes may benefit the NSW community (Appendix A).

B.   CATEGORY C RETENTION

NSW personnel with between 10 and 14 years of experience in the Teams are, in most cases, men with at least three operational deployments. They are the SEALs

growing into more important roles that require a varied and experienced operational background. The SEAL Teams will lean heavily on today's Category C personnel in the next decade.

Table 8.   Retention Percentages For Category C (10-14 Years)
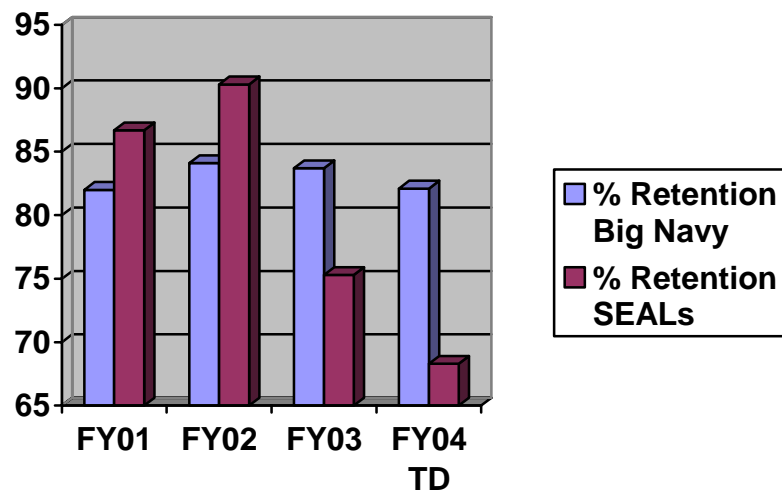
Retention percentages calculated in the Navy are a function of three figures: the number of personnel eligible for reenlistment, the number of personnel that actually reenlist, and the number of personnel separated from the service before the corresponding end of active obligatory service (EAOS). In most cases, there is a significant difference between the reenlistment and retention percentages. The reenlistment percentage deals solely with the numbers of eligible personnel that reenlist:

NSW Reenlistment Percentage

(# reenlisted) ÷ (#eligible) = reenlistment percentage

However, there are often sailors throughout the Navy who are unable to complete their EAOS and are discharged from the Navy due to disciplinary action or medical problems. The Category that accounts for these personnel is the "attrite" grouping, and is listed in Appendix A as "ATT."

At the end of FY01, there were 133 Category C enlisted SEALs eligible for reenlistment. Of the 133 eligible, 117 reenlisted and 2 personnel were discharged due to ATT (Appendix A). In FY02, the retention numbers increased slightly by 3.6%, but in FY03 the Category C retention started a downward slide that the Big Navy did not experience. As of 30 September 2004, 41 of the eligible 60 Category C enlisted SEALs reenlisted. Nowhere in the overall Navy retention numbers, is there a downward trend such as the NSW SEAL Category C 22% decreases described above and in Appendix A.

C.   CATEGORY E RETENTION

Category E SEALs also enjoy better retention rates than the Navy as a whole (see Table 9). Yet, the numbers are still relatively low when compared to the other four NSW categories. The obvious reason for this reduced retention percentage is that Category E personnel are eligible for military retirement at the 20 year mark. However, as the WOT continues, SEALs with combat experience are becoming more important.

Table 9.   Retention Percentages For Category E (20+ Years)
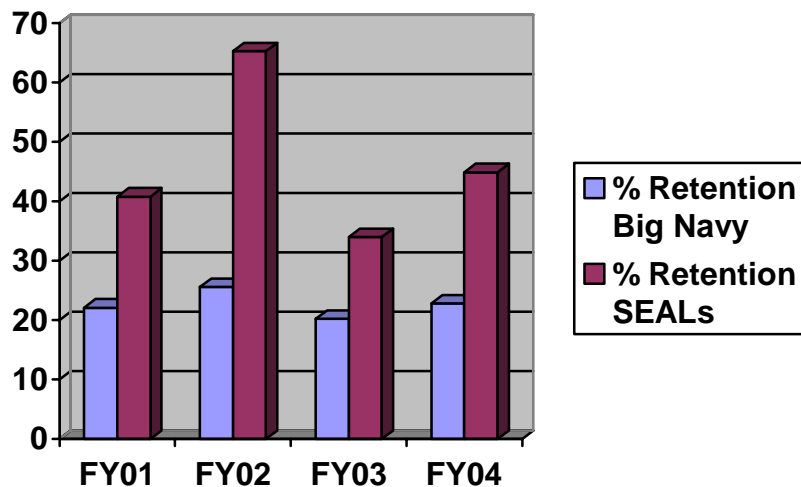
One of the comprehensive goals of increased retention is to help the NSW community achieve the OSD mandated numbers for 2008. In Chapter 2, we looked at possible avenues for improving BUD/S Graduation Rates with respect to increased input

as well as improved recruitment. A combination of getting more qualified candidates through BUD/S and increasing key area retention percentages will certainly help the community achieve the necessary number of SEALs required to sustain a total enlisted SEAL force of over 1700 operators.

In the case of FY04 Category C personnel, if a goal were set at 80% retention instead of 68%, we could expect to see 7 additional enlisted SEALs retained. The same logic can be applied to all categories; however categories C and E provide the greatest opportunity for growth in required specialty areas.

Category C SEALs make up 23% of the enlisted SEAL force, second only to the Category A SEALs. Category C personnel are operators who are currently growing into a critical experience pool that will be essential in standardizing future Training, Tactics, and Procedures (TTPs) for the NSW community. Category E SEALs are all seasoned operators, and if the NSW community is expected to create two new SEAL Teams by 2008, these experienced personnel will provide essential mentorship and training critical to the growth of the NSW community.

Both Category C and E personnel need to enjoy a higher retention rate. The NSW community is currently looking at different options to raise the retention rates, but not necessarily focusing on these two specific categories. The focus now appears to be primarily on Category E. The dilemma is how to entice smart, experienced SEALs to stay with the NSW community; Category C personnel for twenty years and Category E personnel for 30.

D. INCENTIVES

The reasons a Sailor becomes a SEAL are numerous and personal. Usually, an individual pursues a demanding career, such as a SEAL career, because he desires a lifestyle built around excitement, teamwork, bravery, loyalty, aggressiveness, and decisiveness. The NSW community calls for creative individuals, sailors with good judgment and strong convictions to guide them through any challenge. When a new

BUD/S candidate embarks on the long journey to the coveted Trident, he looks inward and is forced to thoroughly examine what it takes to motivate him through such a battery of tests of human endurance.

However, as the years pass, and those BUD/S candidates become seasoned veterans with years of accumulated Temporary Additional Duty (TAD) and deployments, priorities often shift. Key retention factors cited in the 1999 Community Climate Survey (results from the 2004 survey are not available as of this writing) include deployment and detailing satisfaction, career development, command climate, enjoyment of the job, and, most notably, financial compensation. As most SEALs become more senior, pay and allowances to support families become a more central part of their lives. Table 9 shows a Category E retention rate that is near or below the 40% retention rate with the exception of the year after 9/11. Although this is better than the last four years of the entire Navy's retention, a retirement pay incentive would, most probably, increase these numbers as well.

We would like to suggest two possible paths to pursue with respect to increased retention. The first idea is a significant increase in all forms of SEAL specialty pay and the second suggestion is an increased NSW retirement pay percentage for Category E SEALS. These major changes should increase the reenlistment and retention rates in all SEAL enlisted categories, not just categories C and E.

SEAL specialty pay has not significantly increased in over 30 years. Today, there are occasional incremental increases, but the fact remains that in 1968 an enlisted SEAL Petty Officer (E-4) with over four years in the Navy was receiving 36% of his paycheck in the form of different kinds of specialty pay. He received $305 per month for base pay (DFAS, 1968) and specialty pay in two areas (demolition and parachute pay) which added up to $110 (Troy, personal communication, 2004). Conversely, today an enlisted SEAL can count on a maximum of three forms of specialty pay (demolition, parachute, and dive pay) which are representative of only 19% of his paycheck (Defense Link, 2004). An aggressive SOCOM campaign to increase specialty pay (ideally for all SOF) would be an ideal way to increase an operator's take-home salary without having to touch the sensitive subject of changes to base pay.

Although we do not dedicate a Chapter to retirement pay, further study in this area could also reap huge benefits for retention. Each year of service is worth 2.5% toward the retirement multiplier. Hence, 2.5% x 20 years = 50% and 2.5% x 30 years = 75%. The longer an individual stays on active duty, the higher the multiplier and the higher the retirement pay, up to the maximum of 75 percent (DFAS Military Pay, 2004). Since the Commander of Special Operations Command (COMSOCOM) is the "supported commander" in the ongoing War on Terror, he may have the ability to make a change to the sensitive retirement system. There should be a financial incentive to help keep those key experienced (Category E) personnel around well past the twenty-year mark to help train and lead the NSW community. One option would be to increase the 30 year retirement (and associated multipliers) from 75% at 30 years to 100% at 30 years.

(2.5% x 20 years) + (5% x remaining 10 years) = (50% + 50%) = 100% retirement

Therefore, 50% retirement at 20 years would still apply and the next ten years would look like Table 10.

Table 10.   Retirement %

Yrs. Served	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
%Retirement	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	100

E.   CONCLUSION

Retention is the second half of the manning dilemma addressed in Chapter 2. However, in the world of enlisted SEAL retention, there are several more variables affecting whether a SEAL stays in the Navy than there are variables affecting the GR at BUD/S.

This retention model is presented in simple terms, but requires an NSW community consensus on which one factor will play a crucial role in the retention of

SEAL operators. When examining the retention issues for Category C and E, two items should be recalled from past NSW Community Climate Surveys (specifically the 1999 survey). SEALs are often gone; they are away from their families and not properly financially compensated for the time away. Well over 30% of the enlisted SEALs are gone for 200-299 days each year (and a small percentage for over 300 days). Additionally, a vast majority of SEALs are paying out of pocket for housing and operational gear when those costs should be covered by allowances and/or specialty pay.

Few would argue that quality of life is a key issue in the military. The argument here is whether or not increased pay will improve that quality of life. We believe more pay and greater benefits will equate to better retention and ultimately a sustained enlisted SEAL force of well over 1700 personnel starting in FY08. More specialty pay and an increased retirement incentive would certainly help achieve the NSW manning and recruiting objectives.

V. FINAL MODEL AND CONCLUSIONS

A. FINAL MODEL

In this last Chapter, we have created a model demonstrating the expected value (EV) for inputs into the SEAL Teams when utilizing a combination of the two EV models presented in Chapters II and III. In the model below, we demonstrate that modified recruitment and training techniques (Chapter II), as well as unique and new approaches to NSW enlisted retention (Chapter III), can make the difference for the NSW community manning issues. We show that by increasing NSW inventory growth, as well as improving the current retention process, the NSW community can increase the enlisted SEAL numbers while maintaining the enlisted SEAL billet inventory for future requirements. In this chapter, we provide a tool for NSW leaders to utilize when making critical personnel inventory and retention decisions. To calculate the EVs in this Chapter, we will be using the same assumptions as identified in Chapters I and II.

In Chapter 2, we observed that by following COA-A (Table 3) an improvement in the quality of BUD/S recruits could lead to a significantly higher EV of graduating candidates and, as a result, more enlisted SEALs. The current 25% graduation rate (GR) is routinely producing about 225 graduates each year in Coronado, nearly all of whom become SEALs. Increasing the incoming BUD/S candidate GR by just over 5% (a GR of 30.6%) would result in 50 more SEALs a year in a pure COA-A strategy from the inventory growth model described in Chapter 2.

Table 11.   Effect of increased retention rates (annually)

Graduation Rate (GR)	26%	28%	30%	32%	34%	36%	38%
Number of Graduates	234	252	270	288	306	324	342

In Chapter III, we drew a correlation between retention and pay with a retention model. We demonstrated that by focusing pay and benefit changes on Category C and E personnel, the NSW community could increase annual retention to a level that would invalidate the requirement for more BUD/S graduates as set forth in the Chapter II inventory growth model. However, this unilateral approach would not address the long-term requirement for a higher GR out of BUD/S. Only concentrating on the retention model could fix short term manning inventory problems of the next 5-10 years. But as the NSW community loses personnel to resignations and retirements, there would then be a need for an inventory growth model as described in Chapter II.

Ideally, the FY08 goal of 200 additional enlisted SEAL billets at a sustained 100% inventory would be met with a combination of COA-A (as described in Chapter II) and the increase to both pay and benefits addressed in Chapter III. This multilateral approach to achieving a higher GR at BUD/S through improved recruiting and training practices while increasing retention of current operators though better pay and benefits presents will allow the NSW community to meet and/or exceed the manning level requirements as set forth by the Secretary of Defense.

A possible combined solution is demonstrated below. By increasing the BUD/S GR to 28% (only a 3 % increase from the current level) and increasing the retention of Category C and E personnel (utilizing FY04 figures in Appendix A) by 13.4% and 16.9% respectively, the NSW community would see the following results as quickly as FY05:

(@ 28% GR, increase graduates by **27**) + (@ 81.7% Category C Retention, increase SEALs by **8**) + (@61.8% Category E Retention, increase SEALs by **15**) = an increase in operators by **50** per year.

Obviously, any combination of applicable numbers can fit into the above equation. However, one key point is that Category C SEALs in FY04 have a much lower retention rate (68.3%) than the overall Navy (82.1%). There is unquestionably room for improvement in all the enlisted categories, but Category C displays the largest disparity from the big Navy.

The aforementioned policies will also have positive consequences that will help NSW achieve the goal of a sustained increase of 200 enlisted SEALs by FY08. By

improving the quality of recruits sent to BUD/S (see COA-A in Chapter II), the need for expensive changes and renovations associated with increasing the number of recruits starting the program could be avoided (increasing inputs - Chapter II). In other words, by concentrating on quality instead of quantity, the numbers of incoming candidates would be more manageable and costs would be driven down. Additionally, the high cost of BUD/S attrition ($500,000 per candidate) will be minimized due to candidates arriving more mentally and physically prepared for the rigors of the NSW training pipeline. These unintended, yet positive, consequences will indirectly increase retention and SEAL manning levels.

Furthermore, an increase in specialty pay and retirement benefits in specific categories will undoubtedly have long term benefits affecting the other categories, to include the newest SEALs in the community. The increased pay may help retention in the lower categories (A & B) by giving those SEALs an increased incentive to stay in and reach the more senior enlisted categories where individuals are receiving better pay and benefits (specifically, Category E). Also, by increasing retention of personnel at the more senior levels, the NSW community will witness a substantial increase in baseline knowledge of tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs). This, in turn, will help increase mission success and will help enlisted SEALs achieve greater job satisfaction. Additionally, the junior enlisted personnel will have more time to learn from their senior enlisted mentors and leaders, a key element of job satisfaction for most enlisted SEALs.

B. CONCLUSIONS

To satisfy the requirement for increased SEAL manning, the NSW community must examine options available in order to influence the variables in the model shown above. It appears that addressing any one variable in of itself is insufficient to exact total successful change in the NSW community. The NSW objective for increasing the enlisted SEAL inventory should include realistic methods to alter each independent variable and therefore create a large cumulative change by combining small incremental changes over time. Some suggestions for NSW leaders are listed below:

NSW must strive for better qualified personnel for the initial BUD/S pipeline training in order to raise the percentage of graduating candidates who become SEALS. This can be done through more active recruiting and marketing to attract quality recruits. Recruiters should, ideally, engage a larger audience to get more qualified recruits and only send those who are "pre-qualified" to BUD/S. Additionally, recruiters should be held more accountable for recruited personnel who desire to become SEALS. A "recruiter reward incentive" should be extended to recruiters who succeed in getting recruits not just *to* BUD/S, but all the way through the program. This process could be started with a Mini-BUD/S type of program for prospective enlisted BUD/S candidates. This strategy would provide NSW with a look at the prospective recruits while, at the same time, providing the recruits a preview of NSW to determine if they "fit" into the type of work environment associated with the SEAL Teams. Highly qualified potential recruits could be extended an opportunity to be released from their enlisted service obligation were they not to make it through BUD/S. This would lower the cost/benefit ratio for highly qualified recruits who may, otherwise, decide not to take the risk of failing out of BUD/S if such failure entails serving in the Navy Fleet for the remainder of their enlistment.

Future NSW funding has already been requested to build up the BUD/S pipeline with more instructors and facilities in order to push more recruits through the SEAL training pipeline. However, the idea of simply increasing the number of BUD/S candidates is not going to solve the NSW enlisted SEAL manning dilemma. We believe that a better screening process should be implemented to get a higher caliber or "more qualified" individual into the existing pipeline without significantly increasing the number of new candidates checking into BUD/S. The number of graduating BUD/S candidates can, and should, be increased by improving the quality of the input, not necessarily increasing the number of inputs. The historic graduation rate of 25% isn't an NSW requirement, needed in order to retain the quality of SEALS that the community desires. The 25% GR is simply a historic trend at BUD/S; it can be changed without watering down the training curriculum. The key idea in Chapter 2 is that quality graduates come from quality recruits. This proposal would increase SEAL manning inventory as well as retention. Arguably, higher quality recruits will ultimately evolve

into higher quality SEALs who will have a positive impact on the type of personnel who might, otherwise, not stay in the community. Ultimately, a higher quality input to the NSW community would increase retention in addition to improving the manning level.

Another retention option may be to try and prolong the average NSW enlisted SEAL's career through improved pay and benefits. With the exception of FY02 (the post 9/11 figures), there is a historical retirement rate for Category E enlisted SEALs of approximately 60%. In other words, 60% of the SEALs with over twenty years experience are lost every year (Appendix A). Especially during a time of war, there should be a focused effort on reducing the resignation and retirement rate among the older and more experienced SEALS. These experienced operators are critical to helping expand the force through critical instruction and mentorship. Pay and benefits must be raised to help create an incentive for this Category of SEAL operators to remain in the NSW community. There are numerous incentive options being explored at the SOCOM and NSW level, but 100% of base pay retirement benefits for an operator who stays in the NSW community for 30 years may prove to be a worthwhile proposal. Long term retirement improvements may help with the Category E SEALs, but they may not prove an adequate motivation for keeping the Category A, B, and C SEALs in the Navy.

Retirement changes may be the long-term retention solution, but adjusting pay and benefits may be the short-term answer. The pay and benefit problem needs to be addressed in light of the more immediate problem of losing less experienced SEALs to the world of civilian contractors, such as DynCorp and Blackwater. The hard truth is that there are companies willing to pay enlisted SEALs six times their military salary. Although the enlisted paycheck will never be competitive with the PMI salaries, the difference between these pays can certainly be reduced in an effort to extend to enlisted SEALs a more substantial paycheck. As a key piece of SOCOM's WOT arsenal, a fractional increase to the paycheck of enlisted operators (not just SEALs) will go a long way toward winning the game of retention. As discussed in Chapter II, the specialty pay for enlisted SEALs should be adjusted to the corresponding levels they were at in the late 1960s. Simply put, SEAL specialty pay has not kept pace with the significant increases in the cost of living over the last three decades.

Another aspect of retention which may need to be addressed is the NSW WOT deployment strategy. An assessment of how the majority of enlisted SEALs are being employed around the globe illustrates that many deployed SEALs are conducting JCETs. Although there are required political and alliance-building concerns even during a time of war, there is a valid rationale to reduce, or even eliminate, JCETS from the current NSW global agenda. A solution may lie in the suggestion of putting most of the politically insensitive JCETs on hold or assign them to other non-SOF units. Joint and combined evolutions are taking place every day in Afghanistan and Iraq. In this time of critical manning, NSW must look at every operator and how he is being utilized or under-utilized as the case may be. By studying the true SEAL "job requirements" for this war, NSW may need to re-think what the core competencies should be in order to fit the current environment and threat. A changed deployment strategy may lead to better retention and other long term benefits.

Increasing the enlisted SEAL inventory will take some time to implement. However, NSW needs to make an immediate change to the existing force structure that is significant enough to carry out current war time requirements and sustain them during peacetime in the future. Increasing manpower in response to imminent threats, while decreasing manpower for diminishing threats, seems to be a historic trend in the US military record. In order to avoid cyclical retention and manning levels, NSW should adapt a strategy to sustain an adequate SEAL enlisted force. NSW needs consistent benefits and long-term monetary compensation in order to retain enlisted SEALS for the long run. In order to implement plans as described above, increased DOD funding will have to be allocated to NSW.

To maintain this NSW manning model, the leadership within NSW should keep current and accurate data that traces the concerns SEALs consider important. A new NSW Community Climate Survey and Enlisted Exit Survey will be completed shortly and made available for review throughout the community. This tool provides valuable insight into how more detailed variables may be used to update the model in order to develop it into a complex and detailed analytical tool. However, administering this survey every four years will not allow the NSW community to proactively address

manning issues until it is too late to react. A Community Climate Survey should be administered to every enlisted SEAL each year.

If even one of the conclusions listed above is addressed by SEAL leaders, the NSW community will witness a sustainable improvement to the manning and retention issues which will continue to be a concern during this WOT. This war will not disappear any time soon, and the wartime requirements for enlisted SEALs will only increase over time.
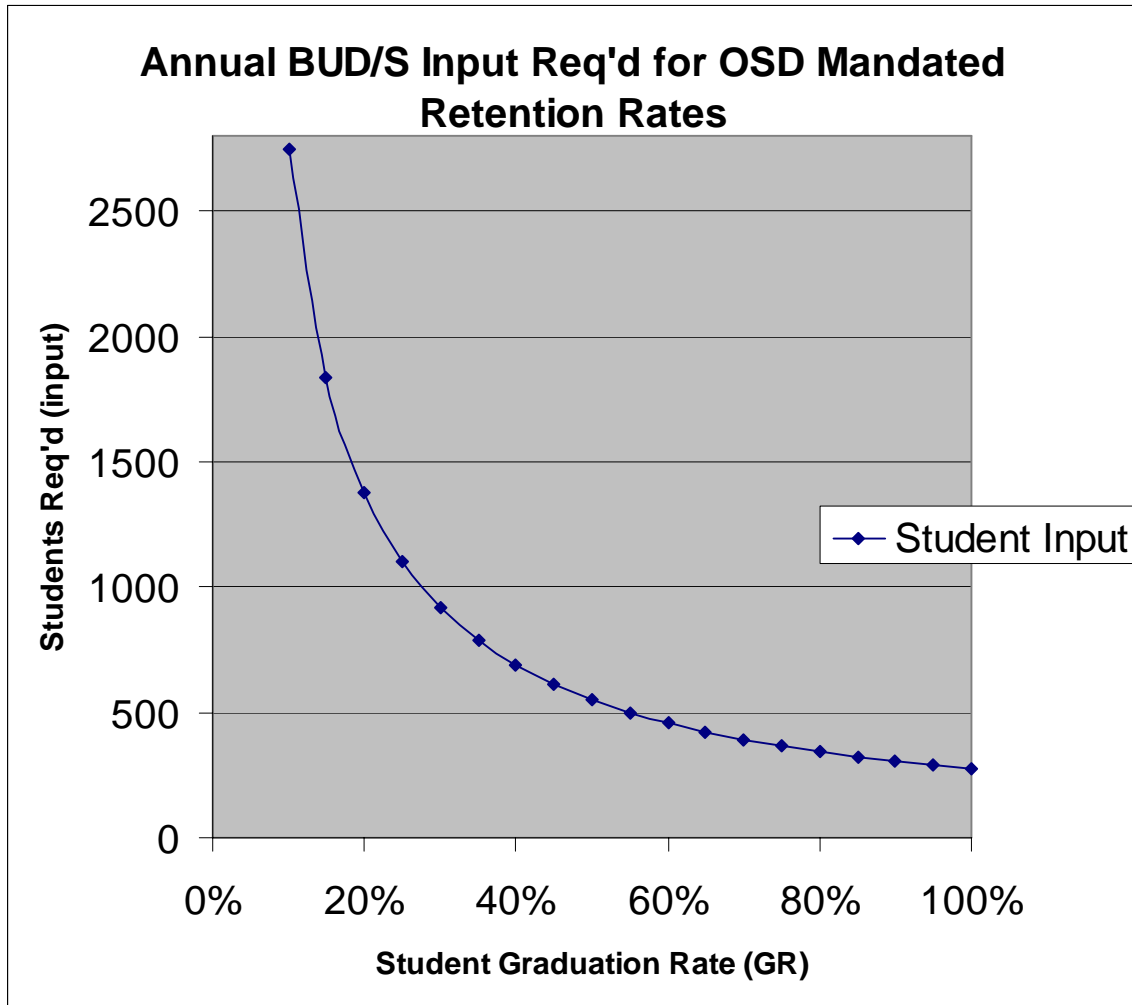
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APPENDIX A. NAVY VS. ENLISTED SEAL REENLISTMENT STATISTICS FY01 TO FY04

Navy	Elig	Reen	ATT	REEN FY01	RETN FY01	Elig	Reen	ATT	REEN FY02	RETN FY02	Elig	Reen	ATT	REEN FY03	RETN FY03	Elig	Reen	ATT	REEN FY04	RETN FYTD
A 0-6 yrs	30628	17314	18314	56.5%	35.4%	26015	14790	16072	56.9%	35.1%	27522	16616	13793	60.4%	40.2%	29594	14650	14248	49.5%	33.4%
B 6-10 yrs	13797	9441	583	68.4%	65.7%	11307	8273	543	73.2%	69.8%	10873	8306	713	76.4%	71.7%	11613	7925	1421	68.2%	60.8%
C 10-14 yrs	9645	8118	257	84.2%	82.0%	8248	7157	259	86.8%	84.1%	7129	6309	413	88.5%	83.7%	5989	5157	293	86.1%	82.1%
D 14-19 yrs	13947	13370	244	95.9%	94.2%	13871	13460	199	97.0%	95.7%	11736	11447	203	97.5%	95.9%	10568	10159	242	96.1%	94.0%
E 20 +	10543	2396	301	22.7%	22.1%	10305	2743	411	26.6%	25.6%	12130	2613	794	21.5%	20.2%	12431	2887	258	23.2%	22.8%
Overall	78560	50639	19699	64.5%	51.5%	69746	46423	17484	66.6%	53.2%	69390	45291	15916	65.3%	53.1%	70195	40778	16462	58.1%	47.1%
Total Resigned / Retired	128					83					158					135				

SEAL ENL	Elig	Reen	ATT	REEN FY01	RETN FY01	Elig	Reen	ATT	REEN FY02	RETN FY02	Elig	Reen	ATT	REEN FY03	RETN FY03	Elig	Reen	ATT	REEN FY04	RETN FYTD
A 0-6 yrs	124	99	3	79.8%	78.0%	119	96	1	80.7%	80.0%	93	63	4	67.7%	64.9%	115	78	7	67.8%	63.9%
B 6-10 yrs	146	113	4	77.4%	75.3%	113	92	3	81.4%	79.3%	77	54	5	70.1%	65.9%	84	66	1	78.6%	77.6%
C 10-14 yrs	133	117	2	88.0%	86.7%	62	56	0	90.3%	90.3%	94	73	3	77.7%	75.3%	60	41	0	68.3%	68.3%
D 14-19 yrs	92	91	2	98.9%	96.8%	79	78	2	98.7%	96.3%	83	79	0	95.2%	95.2%	75	73	2	97.3%	94.8%
E 20 +	71	29	0	40.8%	40.8%	73	49	2	67.1%	65.3%	99	35	4	35.4%	34.0%	88	40	1	45.5%	44.9%
Overall	566	449	11	79.3%	77.8%	446	371	8	83.2%	81.7%	446	304	16	68.2%	65.8%	422	298	11	70.6%	68.8%

ATT = "attrite" = add to number eligible when determining retention percentages (Reen ÷ Elig)

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APPENDIX B. INPUT NUMBER OF CANDIDATES REQUIRED THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE POSSIBLE RANGE OF GRADUATION RATES (0-100%)

Annual BUD/S Input Req'd for OSD Mandated Retention Rates

Y-axis: Students Req'd (input)

X-axis: Student Graduation Rate (GR)

Legend: Student Input

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